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ABSTRACT

This research is primarily concerned with discovering how children's behavior (in relation to altruistic giving) is affected by the verbal advice and behavioral example of a same-sex model on a television screen. The subjects were a group of 600 children drawn from first through fifth grade. They were placed in a situation in which they could give recently-won money to the March of Dimes. While in this situation, the children observed the model giving them advice (to give, not to give, or neutral) and responding to the situation himself (giving or not giving). Every possible combination of preaching and practicing was used, so that there were altruistic models, greedy models, and inconsistent models. Data was collected concerning (1) the subjects' giving behavior, (2) the subjects' ratings of the model, and (3) the subjects' advice to other children. The results revealed that behavioral example affected the children's behavior but not their advice to other children, while the model's exhortations affected the children's advice but not their behavior. Both the model's behavior and his exhortations affected the children's judgment of him, but the relationship between the variables appears to be additive. (MH)

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Preaching and Practicing Self-Sacrifice: Their Locus of Effect Upon Children's Behavior and Cognition[1]

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The experiments on which this paper is based are concerned with the relative impact and locus of effects of exhortations and behavioral example upon the child. By now, it has been well documented that altruistic models will evoke imitative performance from a wide variety of audiences, including sailors and shoppers, college students and young children. However, the impact of verbalizations concerning charitable behavior is considerably more mysterious, if only because of neglect. This is somewhat surprising since at least one theorist has suggested that all forms of social pressure may be interchangeable in affecting responses, and numerous others have suggested the importance of social norms and/or experimental demand characteristics in affecting children's imitative performance. But if, as Don Campbell has indicated, that more speculation than data is available concerning relationships among influencing techniques, then it is all the more true concerning the hypothesized mediations affecting children's imitative performance of altruistic acts. Thus, the present series of studies sought to shed light upon the relations among those variables, typically clustered under the term social pressure, upon behaviors relevant to children's succorance. Yet another consideration prompted systematic

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studies of words and deeds, unconfounded with each other. Abundant data exists indicating that adults and children are much more likely to preach a better game than they practice. Given the generality surrounding many dictates concerned with social proprieties and moral behaviors, and the situational complexities governing an individual's performance of them, it would be surprising indeed if the hypocritical model were not ubiquitous in the child's world. In spite of this, investigators have yet to experimentally study the impact of such moral hypocrisy upon the observing child. In effect, while much has been made of the negative consequences of "double bind" communications, little has been done in systematically exploring affects of contradictory words and deeds relevant to social norms.

Hence, our research program has been concerned, primarily, with the impact of statements concerning behavioral enactments of the norm of giving. In addition to these input variables, however, attention has been directed toward the relationships among the response variables. The variables of interest have been donation behavior, congitions concerning charity, and the child's judgments concerning the attractiveness of the model.

Before discussing the details of the experiments, most being ably conducted by Nancy Walbek, it should be noted that our concern has been with regard to the impact of verbalizations concerning norms, rather than the relevance of moral judgments. We have data suggesting that children do hold a "norm of giving" or "social responsibility" to employ current terminology. Thus the determinants effecting the salience of this norm and the relationship between it and its behavioral enactment has been one of our concerns. We have not studied a learning process, but rather have focussed upon conformity behaviors--or at least performance of well learned behaviors as a function of social inputs. Finally, most of the experiments

we have conducted have employed a television model rather than a live one. The results may thus have more relevance to the TV than the motherhood industry.

Now to the procedures and results. Over 600 children, drawn from the first through fifth grades, have been exposed to our modeling paradigm. While most have been drawn from schools within upper and middle class suburban neighborhoods, some samples have been obtained from semi-rural areas near Princeton, New Jersey, and from a lower social class district in Southern California.

The child is always presented with a model of the same gender as himself. Over the course of the experiments, we have employed over 10 different models, both adult and child. The procedure is to bring the child to an experimental trailer, explain to him that we are interested in testing the appeal of a bowling game, and, as part of that game, indicate that he may win gift certificates (or money) whenever he obtains a high score. As part of the instructions, he is informed that he may, like other children, contribute to the March of Dimes, although this donation is optional. The actual movements required to make the donation are demonstrated by the E. An appropriate canister is provided for these donations. The following slides show the experimental room.

Slides 1 and 2

The subject plays the bowling game for a brief period so as to assure the Experimenter that the child understands the instructions and to obtain a base rate measure of donations. Following this, the child is exposed to the model in the Experimenter's absence. As indicated, the model is typically presented by video tape. Always, there are two levels of behavioral example, the model either contributing part of his winnings to the needy others,

or not doing so. Failures to donate are indicated by the model placing the money into either his pocket or a canister marked "my money." This action takes place during the five winning trials. On the remaining five non-winning trials, the model exhorts the child. Three levels of exhortations are used: Charity exhortations include such statements as "It's good to give to the poor," "If you give, others will like you," "I hope the child watching will give to the crippled children," "If you don't give, others will not like you," and so forth. Greed exhortations use identical pleas as those on behalf of charity except that negatives are inserted; hence the child may hear "It's not so nice to give," "I hope the child watching will not give to the crippled children." Finally, as a control condition for the effects of the model's sociability, another group hears the model verbalize normatively neutral statements, e.g. how much he is enjoying the game. Hence, some children are presented with a model who preaches and practices charity, or preaches and practices greed. Others view a model who preaches charity but simultaneously practices greed (the hypocrite), while another group witnesses a model who preaches greed but practices charity (the Young Republican). Following ten trials, the M leaves the room (or screen), and the child, in the absence of any audience, proceeds to bowl and to distribute his winnings. His total winnings are typically 45 cents. As the subject completes the game and starts to leave the trailer, E re-enters and administers a post-experimental questionnaire addressed to the child's understanding of the experimental manipulations and his judgments of the "niceness" of the model.

Results.

The results, and the lack thereof, regarding donation behavior have been remarkably consistent. The child's (particularly the boy's) witnessing

a donating other increases the probability that he will donate while alone, although the effects are rather weak and appear quite specific to the situation. The results, however, do replicate those reported by Hartup and Coates and Rosenhan and While. We have yet to increase aiding responses through the use of exhortations--neither the preaching of charity nor of greed appears to alter the child's donation behavior. Of the two influencing techniques, behavioral example consistently appears than exhortations in affecting succorant acts of the child. It should be especially noted that we have yet to detect an interaction effect of these two variables, and, I must despairingly confess, it has not been for the lack of trying. To produce an hypocrisy or inconsistency effect upon donation behavior we have employed, as our model, the Experimenter who was testing the child, have informed children that if they were "good" they would win candy, and have used exhortations incorporating statements concerning the rewarding consequences of succorance and the punitive social consequences correlated with greed, and have assessed the child's reaction times involved in deciding to donate, as well as his verbal judgments of the model's attractiveness. As yet, exhortations have failed to interact with behavioral example to affect the subjects' altruistic acts. As yet, then, those conditions lending potency to exhortations or to inconsistency to alter altruistic behavior remain to be determined.

In addition to our interest in altruistic behavior, we have also been concerned with yet another measure--the child's judgments of the "niceness" of the model. Our results have been rather consistent in this regard. While some knotty fourth order interactions have occurred with words and deeds, race, and sex of subjects, they have been found relatively uninter-

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pretable and unreplicable. By and large, the results show that judgments are affected by both behavioral and verbal allegiances expressed by the model to the norm of giving. We have not yet obtained a first order interaction of these variables in affecting judgments, nor is there hint of an hypocrisy effect on those higher order interactions that were found. Thus the preacher of charity and the practitioner of greed is a rather esteemed person. The following slides from two of our studies will demonstrate this additive relationship.

Slides

I might add, in this regard, that this additive relationship may also hold for sins of commission as well as sins of omission. That is, a recent study employing kindergarten and first grade children found that when the data were organized according to the child's perceptions of what he had seen, as opposed to what was presented, the adult models who preached self restraint but stole M&M candies were judged as more attractive persons than those who simply transgressed and held a "neutral conversation" about the game.

A common assumption concerning the modeling effect in altruistic contexts is that it is attributable to cues reminding the child of his social responsibilities to others. Whether empathy or social norms are used as the explanatory device, there is little evidence from our series of studies that cognitive concerns directly related in content to altruism are relevant to the altruistic act. Indeed, repeated statements by the model regarding such concerns has proved relatively impotent in affecting behavior. But we have attacked this problem even more directly. Our approach has been to ask the subject to leave "messages" for other children as they are alone playing the bowling game. These messages are tape recorded and

subsequently rated as to their emphasis upon charitable behavior. As expected, the experimental manipulation did affect the child's preaching behavior, but it was not the model's actions that did so, but rather his exhortations. There has been no evidence gathered which suggests, within our typical modeling situation, that the examplar's actions which affect the child's charitable behavior in fact give rise to cognitions whose content is directly related to this activity. While children's pleas to others were often persuasive, and sometimes humorous (as when the 3rd grader exhorted others to donate so the crippled children will not riot and burn the stores down), they are not predictive of donation acts. Thus, when donation behavior and cognitions concerning charity are assessed simultaneously, verbal allegiance to the norm of giving is not correlated with behavioral conformity to it. In sum, their money isn't where their mouth is.

To recapitulate--behavioral example has been a weak but rather consistent effect in altering the child's succorant acts toward needy others. The model's exhortations, be they from an unknown model, or from the Experimenter acting as the model, or in the context where an incentive was offered for "goodness", have yet to be found to produce such an effect. Exhortations from the model do have an effect of varying the salience of "norm of giving," as indexed by the messages left by the subject to another child. As yet, the actions of the model have not been demonstrated to affect children's thoughts about charity. Finally, both the model's exhortation concerning the norm of giving and behavioral demonstrations relevant to it affect the child's judgment concerning him, but the relationship between the variables appears, by and large, additive. Consistency or hypocrisy concerning altruism has not yet been demonstrated as a relevant dimension affecting the child's evaluation of the examplar, or his succorant behavior.

It thus appears that explanations of altruistic modeling by children cannot be reduced to some notions concerning the salience of norms directly relevant to self-sacrifice. We have abundant evidence that children do hold such a norm, if not conform to it. Thus, if children are asked if one should help the poor, they agree that one should. If asked to leave a message for another child, they will preach charity in spite of being exposed immediately before to an exhorter of avarice. Finally, they judge the model on the basis of verbal and behavioral allegiance to such norms. But in spite of this, norm reminders, either self or other generated, do not appear to be important variables in eliciting altruistic acts.

Explanations of such behavior which are based upon rather vague notions pertaining to conformity have been more frequently offered than studied. The investigations reported here suggest that those two social influencing processes, i.e. exhortations and enactments, have both common and independent variances associated with them. Using Don Campbell's term, they are only partially "intersubstitutable." It is obvious, of course, that words and deeds, as often manipulated within the modeling situation, have been found, under certain circumstances, to be interchangeable. Mischel and Liebert and Rosenhan, Fredericks and Burrowes have demonstrated that when double standards for the model and child are imposed, via instructions concerning game rules, instructional affects upon the child's rule adherence were found. Indeed, the latter mentioned experimenters found that double standards were likely to increase the frequency of thefts, thus suggesting an interaction effect of the model's words and deeds upon children's actions.

Conceptions concerning influencing processes affecting children's behaviors thus must differentiate between the influencing powers of words and deeds in the child's adoption of rules, from those affecting the child's

conformity to more general norms. The impact of each of these input variables varies considerably in these two circumstances. Whether these variations are due to the specificity of the instructions concerning the motor acts necessary for learning the rule, the rehearsal effect produced during the pre-test trials in which the coercive nature of the model is well demonstrated, or from other variables is yet unknown It is clear, however, that positive explanations of social influencing processes which so glibly resort to the concept of conformity do more to obscure than clarify.

Given the situation where enactments of well learned responses serve as the dependent variable, there is little reason to suppose that contradictory inputs concerning this social norm generate conflict in the child or the child's rejection of the model. Neither donation behavior, attraction ratings, the child's reaction time measures of involving the distribution of his sources, his preachings, or incidences of theft have been found to be sensitive to acts of hypocrisy. While recall errors by children are consistently greater when exposed to inconsistent than consistent models, memory functions cannot entirely explain the lack of effect. When data are analyzed for those subjects who recalled all experimental conditions correctly, the same relationships remain. Thus, consistency in preachings and practices does not appear as an important dimension affecting the child's evaluative responses in contexts involving altruism. It indeed may be a "just world," however, as children apparently have no greater expectations of consistency from others as they do for themselves.

Footnote

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